



Jeffrey Wright, a science teacher at Male High School in Jefferson County, received this crystal glass bowl and \$10,000 after being named 2006 Kentucky Teacher of the Year during ceremonies in the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort. Pam Jackson, Middle School Teacher of the Year, Kelli Lynnette Stice, Elementary School Teacher of the Year, and 21 other outstanding Kentucky teachers were recognized at the event.

Wright named 2006 Teacher of the Year

By Lisa Gross

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Jeffrey Wright, a science teacher at Male High School (Jefferson County), is the 2006 Kentucky Teacher of the Year. He also was selected High School Teacher of the Year. Officials of the Kentucky Department of Education and Ashland Inc., sponsors of the awards program, made the announcements Oct. 11 during a ceremony in Frankfort.

Kelli Lynnette Stice, a primary teacher at W.R. McNeill Elementary in the Bowling Green Independent School District, was named 2006 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Pam Jackson, a language arts teacher at Elkhorn Middle School (Franklin County), was named 2006 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

The three join 21 teachers from across the state honored with 2006 Ashland Inc. Teacher Achievement Awards. Stice and Jackson each received \$3,000 and a customized art-glass vase from Ashland Inc.

Wright received \$10,000 and a commemorative crystal bowl. In addition, the Department of Education will provide a sabbatical or suitable alternative to Wright. He will represent the state in the 2006 National Teacher of the Year competition.

The remaining 21 winners each



Wright

received \$500 cash awards. All 24 teachers received framed certificates and were honored at a luncheon following the ceremony attended by Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Secretary of Education Virginia Fox, Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit and Ashland Chairman and CEO Jim O'Brien.

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Board discusses assistance for low-performing schools

By Cathy Lindsey

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Kentucky's lowest-performing schools could receive added assistance through intervention measures recommended to the Kentucky State Board of Education at its October meeting. In addition to the current consequences that apply to schools in crisis, these measures would allow the Kentucky Department of Education to intervene with a more intense focus to raise student performance levels and close the achievement gap between certain groups of students.

For months, the department has been analyzing research and discussing the most effective strategies to assist low-performing schools. With input from Highly Skilled Educators (who work in schools in assistance), local school district staff, achievement gap coordinators, district support staff, targeted assistance coaches, the Partnership for Kentucky Schools and other educational consultants, department staff compiled a number of interventions for the state board to consider.

The recommendations were prioritized

around five major issues: school culture, leadership, articulated curriculum, effective instruction, and data-driven decision making and measuring progress. These issues have been identified as those having the greatest impact on student achievement.

These interventions include providing mathematics and literacy coaches, requiring and providing a support network of specialists, requiring and providing professional development focused on the revised core content, requiring superintendents and principals to work with assigned mentors and requiring culture/climate assessments as part of the audit process. (For more information about the proposed interventions, see the Commissioner's Column on Page 3.)

The board is considering these recommendations in an effort to improve chronically underachieving schools. Approval of the interventions could be granted at the board's December meeting.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher, who addressed the

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Midpoint CATS results show progress

By Lisa Gross

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Results from the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) given to Kentucky public school students in the spring of 2005 generally show progress when compared to assessment data from past years. In addition, seven-year trends show improvements in all content areas assessed by the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), according to information released by the Kentucky Department of Education this fall.

"Accountability indices at nearly every grade level have shown yearly gains over seven years of CATS," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit. (See chart on Page 10.) "Some content areas did not show gains compared to previous years, and the instructional challenges associated with maintaining high academic performance may have played a role."

Scores from spring 2005 represent the first half of the data that will provide accountability judgments for public schools in 2006 CATS.

"Our students' performance in core subject areas such as reading and mathematics shows progress over the years. At all grade levels, the percentages of students performing at the novice level (the lowest of four possible levels) in reading and

mathematics have dropped as much as 18 percentage points since 1999," the commissioner said.

Even though most subject and grade levels showed improvement, Wilhoit said he has some concerns about what the data show.

"Less progress was made in some con-

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Bulletin Board



Photo by Rick McComb

Conferences

Exceptional children

The annual Conference on Programs for Exceptional Children will be Nov. 20-22 at the Galt House East in Louisville. The meeting theme is "Gaining on the Gap with an Unbridled Spirit."

www.kycec.org/news.htm

English/language arts conference

The Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts will hold its annual conference Feb. 24-25, 2006, at the Downtown Marriott in Louisville.

<http://conference.kcte.org/>

Music educators' conference

The Kentucky Music Educators Association has scheduled an in-service/professional development conference, Feb. 9-11, 2006, at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville.

www.kmea.org/conference/confreg.htm

Gifted workshop

The Kentucky Association for Gifted Education has set Feb. 23-24, 2006, as the dates for its winter professional development workshop at the Marriott Griffin Gate in Lexington. "Gifted Education: It's the Right Thing to Do" is the theme.

www.wku.edu/kage

Events

'Write Your Own Workshop'

The Kentucky Association of School Councils will hold a workshop titled "Write Your Own Workshop" on Dec. 8 in Danville. Participants will learn how to write informative workshops with a dash of energy and fun. Topics include: defining content and focusing on results; interactive learning; presentation of materials; and much more. Audience: anyone with an area of content knowledge to share, including school and district leaders, teachers and trainers.

Contact: Lois Quilligan, (859) 238-2188, training@kasc.net

www.kasc.net

Aviation art contest

The Kentucky Department of Aviation is sponsoring the 2006 International Aviation Art Contest. This year's theme is "Air Sports and Nature in Harmony." Students are eligible to participate in three age groups: 6 to 9, 10 to 13 and 14 to 17. A state aviation official will visit first-place winners and present them with a framed award certificate. Deadline for the contest is Jan. 10, 2006.

For more information, contact the Kentucky Department of Aviation at (502) 564-4480.

<http://transportation.ky.gov/aviation/education.htm>

Children's Theatre

The Lexington Children's Theatre offers the following performances for school groups:

"The Adventures of Madeline," based on the Madeline book series by Ludwig Bemelmans, on Dec. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Contact: Box office for group rates and performance times, (859) 254-4546

www.lctonstage.org

Stage One student matinees

Stage One will offer student matinees for seven productions during the 2005-2006 season at the Kentucky Center in Louisville. Upcoming performances include:

"Nightingale" by Hans Christian Andersen, Nov. 21-Dec. 16; and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" by Barbara Robinson, Nov. 21-Dec. 16.

Tickets for student matinees are \$6 each for all 10 a.m. performances and \$5 per student for 11:30 a.m. or noon performances. Stage One provides free lesson plans for each production and other teaching tools for the arts, aligned to core content, on its Web site.

Contact: Box office, (800) 989-5946

www.stageone.org

Thoroughbred Center

The Thoroughbred Center's Theatre for Children, located in Lexington, has scheduled performances of "Charlotte's Web" for school groups. The play is based on E.B. White's ever-popular tale of bravery, selfless love and the true meaning of friendship. Performances are Dec. 1-2 at 10 a.m. and noon.

Contact: Box office for group rates and performance times, (859) 293-1853

www.TheThoroughbredCenter.com/theatre

Japan Fulbright program

The Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program provides K-12 teachers and administrators with the opportunity to participate in three-week study visits to Japan. Participants return home with a follow-up plan designed to introduce Japanese culture to American students. Deadline for applications for the 2006 program is Dec. 10, 2006.

www.iie.org/jfmf

Resources

Home building CD

The National Association of Home Builders offers "Building Homes of Our Own," a free CD-ROM, for teachers to use in the classroom. The CD introduces students to the basics of homeownership, industry careers and financial responsibility.

www.homesofourown.org/

Outdoor classroom grant

The Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation, International Paper and the National Geographic Explorer! classroom magazine offer grants to K-12 schools to improve their science curriculum by building an outdoor classroom or improving an existing one. Any setup from a garden to a bird sanctuary to an outdoor laboratory can qualify. Annual awards between \$2,000 and \$20,000 are given to 100 public schools. Application deadline is Dec. 31.

www.lowes.com/lowes/lkn?action=pg&p=AboutLowes/outdoor/index.html

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr
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Commissioner's Comments

Consequences possible when student learning stalls

By Gene Wilhoit

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Since the beginning of Kentucky education reform in 1990, the work of Kentucky public schools has been all about our students. Public education has been guided by what's best for all our students — how educators can support them and give them every opportunity to learn at high levels.

You have responded in remarkable ways. As a result, we have examples of excellence in all parts of the commonwealth. In many districts there are excellent schools. These schools are breaking down barriers to learning so that every child excels. These schools set high expectations for every student, and educators work to make high achievement a reality.

Regrettably, we also have schools that have not overcome barriers such as poverty, diverse learning needs, race and location. I trust all of us are beyond the time when we point to these barriers as the primary reasons why students do not learn at high levels.

We must constantly ask ourselves if we have high expectations for all students, and are we as educators pushing students to achieve at high levels. Children will accomplish whatever adults expect them to accomplish — at high or low levels.

The Kentucky Board of Education has put me and the Kentucky Department of Education on notice to use whatever authority and power we have to turn around chronically low-performing schools. The time to act is now!

The state board knows that if Kentucky is going to compete successfully in a world economy that is changing at an ever-faster pace, every public school must be perform-

ing at proficiency or beyond by 2014. And, to help ensure that educators in those persistently low-performing schools become more committed to that goal, the board is considering several, more aggressive interventions.

The board wants to step up the department's involvement in the teaching and learning at these schools. The increased assistance will focus on raising student performance levels and closing the achievement gap between certain groups of students.

Currently, 46 schools are classified as Level 1, 2 or 3 schools under the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). All of these schools received Scholastic Audits or Reviews. The lowest-achieving schools — Level 3 — received Comprehensive School Improvement Funds to help implement changes and the services of a Highly Skilled Educator to advise administrators and teachers on how to improve teaching and learning.

Level 1 and 2 schools may receive the school improvement funds, based upon school size and achievement gaps, and may receive the services of a Highly Skilled Educator. This accountability cycle, all Level 1 and 2 schools requested assistance from a Highly Skilled Educator.

New in 2006

When CATS results are released in the fall of 2006, any school that has been classified as a Level 3 school for two consecutive biennia or any school that becomes a Level 3 school in 2006 will receive a Scholastic Audit, and its district also will receive an audit. Audit teams will have the authority to recommend to me one of

three interventions:

- that the superintendent takes over governance of the school
- that the Highly Skilled Educator takes over governance of the school
- that the school council retains control of the school

I will make the final decision based on what is best for the children in the school. If our low-performing schools remain on the same course, governance of 15 Level 3 schools and six Tier 5 schools could be altered in 2006.

Being reviewed

The board is considering amending current accountability regulations to help improve teaching and learning in chronically low-performing schools that repeatedly find themselves in the assistance category on CATS. The proposals also support a no-tolerance approach to schools that are not closing the achievement gaps for No Child Left Behind (NCLB), consistently not making Adequate Yearly Progress for specific student groups.

The new recommendations would require a Scholastic Audit for any school that is classified as a Level 3 school for two out of three biennia (2001-2002, 2003-2004 and 2005-2006). The audit team would make recommendations about school governance to me. These consequences also would be recommended for a school classified as Level 3 for one biennium.

By imposing these requirements on schools that fall into Level 3 status for two out of three biennia rather than two consecutive biennia, the board seeks to provide more sustained intervention to these schools.

Some low-performing schools move into assistance, out of assistance and back into Level 3 status from one biennium to another.

The board also is considering an amendment that would require schools classified as Tier 5 under NCLB to the same interventions as Level 3 schools. The amendment also may recommend the consequences for Tier 3 and Tier 4 schools under NCLB.

Getting more prescriptive with low-performing schools is a departure from the tenets of education reform that allowed decisions about teaching and learning to be made at the school level — even at schools in assistance. Principals and teachers in chronically low-performing schools have demonstrated that they have been unable to boost student achievement by themselves.

The interventions being studied by the state board

are arranged around five major topics to provide the greatest impact on student achievement. Those topics are school culture, leadership, articulated curriculum, effective instruction, and data-driven decisions and progress monitoring.

If they sound familiar, they are! These are all areas in which we have data to show that high-performing schools excel. Schools that excel in these areas are motivating all students to achieve at high levels.

Central Elementary in Johnson County is one of the state's highest achieving schools with an academic index of 116 on the 2005 CATS. According to Shauna Patton, the Title I coordinator for Johnson County Schools, the school and district continually make connections. They work together to support students and new teachers. All decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development and more are based on data.

At Johnson County Middle where about 14 percent of the students are special education, administrators and teachers don't make excuses of poverty or too many students with diverse learning needs. They work to help all students achieve. In 2000, the school's academic index for students with disabilities was 36. In 2005, the index was 95.1. This school is making substantial gains every year!

But it's not only in Johnson County. There are success stories in schools throughout the state that are educating students from diverse backgrounds and multitudes of learning needs.

At Deer Park Elementary in Daviess County, the academic index for students with disabilities in 2005 was 103.1 compared to 105.1 for students without disabilities. At Hacker Elementary in Clay County, the academic index in 2005 for students participating in the free- and reduced-lunch program was 100.6 compared with 106.5 for students who don't participate in the program.

These and many more schools show that proficiency and beyond by 2014 can be a reality.

I've sent an e-mail to 87 superintendents who have at least one school in their districts that is not performing at a level that ensures a successful future for children. I have alerted them — at the state board's direction — that changes in these schools must be made. And, I showed willingness to assist in any and every way possible.

I trust these superintendents will look to the Department of Education and those successful schools to learn better how to make the school improvements that will deliver education of a quality that all children deserve.

I am confident that together we can get the work done. It may not be easy work for some educators — consequences never come easy. However, the result of all Kentucky schools at proficiency or beyond will be worth the effort — for our children and the future of Kentucky.

(To comment on this column, e-mail Commissioner Wilhoit at gene.wilhoit@education.ky.gov.)



Photo by Rick McComb

Celebrating new surroundings

Campton Elementary students Darian Burks, left, and Kaitlyn Halsey show Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit some of the learning materials that were moved from their old school to the new facility that opened for classes on Oct. 10 in Wolfe County. The girls and other classmates served as tour guides of the newly constructed Campton Elementary after a dedication ceremony in early October.

Relevant learning opportunities help prepare Conner High School students for careers

By Joy Barr

joy.barr@education.ky.gov

Seeking a chosen profession requires a plan beyond high school — whether postsecondary education or training. Students at Conner High School in Boone County have the opportunity to perform at high levels in their chosen fields of interest through a four-year program, Pathways to Careers.

Conner students are learning about different career options and career networking before they participate in an internship and co-op program with local businesses. Led by Lynn Baldwin, vocational special needs education teacher at Conner High School, the program introduces students to a broad range of relevant, career-related learning opportunities.

Students in Baldwin's classes learn to be independent thinkers and to make good personal and career choices. She teaches students to look at their strengths and weaknesses and use them to their advantage in making career decisions. Each class, beginning with Career Choices, allows students to discover for themselves exactly what will be their best course of action for the future.

Students must complete at least one job-shadowing experience. Throughout the school year, each student spends time with, or "shadows" a local business professional to learn more about work in that career field. After these experiences, students write about what they have learned and whether it was useful. These assignments can later be included in their writing portfolios.

Baldwin encourages her students to plan and to prepare for the workplace. Helping her students find success in school and in the work environment recently earned Baldwin the designation of National Special Needs Vocational Teacher of the Year. The National Association of Vocational Education — Special Needs Personnel recognized her accomplishment at the Association for Career and Technical Education's annual convention.

Cindy Goetz, a special vocational teacher/teacher of visually impaired students in Boone County, nominated Baldwin for the award. "Lynn helps guide each student with his or her individual learning styles to find success in the work they accomplish," said Goetz.

"I enjoy seeing the benefits of what teaching does for students

in the real world," Baldwin said. "It is just fascinating to see what we do here in high school. It does make a difference."

The Pathways to Careers program provides a continuum of career education experiences for high school students and course content that includes concepts of human relations, life and employability skills, and opportunities for work-based learning. Career Options and Career Networking, classes within the program, offer students opportunities to develop job-finding and -keeping skills and to focus on orientation and exploration in 14 career clusters. After completion of Career Options and Career Networking, students may select a career major or work experience.

Baldwin's teaching philosophy is that every child has the right to learn the same information as others, but she is aware that not all students learn the same way. She finds a challenge in figuring out how each student learns and then tailoring coursework so each can reach his or her potential. She pushes students further to explore and expand their abilities, she said.

Baldwin guides her students through many hands-on activities, entrepreneur activities, field trips, internships and co-op jobs. The students are involved in entrepreneur projects that include a school business activity where they learn to design a product, produce it, market it and determine how to use the profits.

Students operate an in-school furniture refinishing business. The company creates a needed commodity for the school and gets the students involved with other students and staff.

Each week, students also are required to craft projects with their hands from what they learn in class. It's meant to help students improve at showing what they learn, Baldwin said. Students have made tables, chairs and shelves with donated materials.

Baldwin makes sure that every student — despite the variety of learning styles — has a way to learn in her classroom. The fur-



Lynn Baldwin, left, vocational special needs teacher at Conner High School (Boone Co.), helps Christina Roll review a driver's manual before Christina begins a writing assignment. Students in Baldwin's Pathways to Careers classes learn life and employability skills that prepare them for the future.

niture refinishing business and weekly mini-projects help students who are better at demonstrating learned skills. Other opportunities are available for students who demonstrate learning through writing, as well as occasions for visual and oral learners.

"It is not really my classroom. The class is made up of many different individuals who need different ways to get the same information. It is my job to help each of the students learn to the best of his or her ability while in 'our' classroom for the time that each student is here,"

said Baldwin.

She often checks on her students to see how they are doing in the work force, and follows their professional development after graduation.

Basic concepts of human relations, life skills, overview of career clusters and opportunities for work-based learning are covered in Baldwin's classroom. The courses are open to all students at Conner, but entry is usually based upon teacher recommendation, student need and Individual Graduation Plans.

Baldwin often shares her experiences and successful strategies

with colleagues. She has presented workshops at several district conferences and at the state conference for special needs teachers. She has developed a broad network of community contacts to assist her students in internship and co-op positions.

Many of these positions lead to full-time employment or additional training in the fields to help students fulfill their career goals. Baldwin's plan to provide relevant work experiences for her students seems to be working.

Contact: Lynn Baldwin at Conner High School, (859) 334-4400, lbald@boone.k12.ky.us

Changed your address? Let us know about it.

Kentucky Teacher receives mailing addresses for all active Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Retirement System. If you are employed by a Kentucky public school, you can change your address or mailing information in one of two ways:

1. Complete a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system's Web site at <http://ktrs.ky.gov/ktrsresources/MEMinfo/chgaddrnew.htm>.

2. Submit a written request that includes your old address, new address, Social Security number and signature.

Mail the form or written request to:

Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System
ATTN: Tammy Brown
479 Versailles Road
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to kyteacher@education.ky.gov or send your change of address information in writing to:

Kentucky Teacher
1914 Capital Plaza Tower
500 Mero St.
Frankfort, KY 40601

Training helps school councils work toward proficiency

Proficiency isn't a goal just for Kentucky students, schools and districts. Beginning this year, proficiency is also the goal for all Kentucky school councils.

To help "School Council Proficiency" become a reality, the Kentucky Association of School Councils has developed a new training program for the parents, teachers and principals who are making important decisions for Kentucky schools. The workshops for new and experienced council members provide more information about a council's role in student achievement, said Ronda Harmon, associate executive director of the association.

Since last spring, 125 trainers have been certified to teach the new training materials. The Kentucky Association of School Councils maintains a database of all trainers and the workshops they teach, Harmon said.

To guide the training, the association also developed a definition of "School Council Proficiency," which features 16 keys for success. Those keys are structured under three topics: the focus of a council's work, decisions a council makes and the process a council uses. The keys can be downloaded at www.kasc.net/kasc/Proficiency.htm.

New council members still receive information about budgeting, legal responsibilities, policy making, personnel issues, and meeting and records requirements. However, all workshops focus on the council's responsibility to determine instructional practices at their schools and to establish policies on how students will be taught.

New council members are required to take six hours of training the first year. That training is available in a six-hour "Introduction to School-Based

Decision Making (SBDM)" workshop. Experienced council members must complete three hours of additional training.

The training sessions available to experienced council members include:

Research, Instruction and Action — provides information about instructional practices and brain research that can be used to help students achieve. The emphasis is on learning what makes good school policy and how council policies can impact instruction.

Planning for Achievement — helps council members develop and monitor the school improvement plan

Teamwork for Results — explores teambuilding, hiring and professional development

Council Work and School Culture — focuses on how councils can provide a positive teaching and learning environment

that leads to high expectations for all students and positive relationships between staff and students.

Beyond the core training programs, the council proficiency training also includes "Principal Selection Training." The materials for this session provide information about the process behind hiring a principal, developing hiring criteria, reviewing applications, conducting interviews and selecting the right instructional leader for the school.

Because district support is vital, another component of the training system is the "SBDM for District Leaders" workshop. In this session, district leaders work with the proficiency keys and discuss how to use those keys and the accompanying tools to help guide their work with school councils and help the councils focus on student achievement.

Each workshop session offers resources and specific tools that participants can take back to their schools. Once trained, council members can use the materials to train other educators and parent groups in their schools.

"There are many parts of the training that are not specific to SBDM," Harmon said. "For example, the workshop on culture includes the importance of establishing relationships with students and adults to create a learning environment where all students can succeed. That information can help any educator or parent work to improve student achievement."

For more information about the workshops, go to the Kentucky Association of School Councils Web site at www.kasc.net. Contact: Lois Quilligan, (859) 238-2188, training@kasc.net

Students encourage literacy through Unite to Read activities

Students in schools throughout Kentucky are getting "down on the farm" this school year to celebrate their reading skills as part of the Unite to Read project. Kentucky's Career and Technical Education Student Organization (CTSO), Future Educators of America and Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) member groups have joined together for the second year to promote literacy and lifelong reading among public school students and to provide parents with strategies to help their children read.

Activities coincide with Gov. Ernie Fletcher's proclamation of November as Unite to Read Month in Kentucky. Many schools began hosting "Share a Story Night" events in October. High school members of the student groups comprising the CTSO served as hosts to elementary students and their parents for these events.

CTSO student groups are DECA (marketing, management and entrepreneurship students); Future Business Leaders of America; Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (family and consumer sciences students); Health Occupations Students of America; FFA (agriculture education students); SkillsUSA (industrial education students) and Technology Student Association.

This year's "Share a Story Night" activities use the book, "Click, Clack Moo: Cows That Type," the story of cows that type

and a farmer who learns the art of business negotiations with his barnyard animals. Kentucky Educational Television and Kentucky Council on Economic Education endorse the importance of literacy and provide lesson plans and activities as project partners in Unite to Read.

Unite to Read Month also signaled the beginning of schoolwide reading competitions to increase the literacy skills of middle and high school students. Students in participating student organizations receive recognition in a certificate program for reading a variety of resources — novels, short stories, newspapers, magazines and technical manuals.

Activities in Campbell County Schools exemplify how Kentucky student organization members work to excite other students about reading. The Campbell County Unite to Read project began with a "Hay Read" event on Oct. 25. Student organization members at the high school planned activities for elementary students from six schools, their parents and families.

This "Share a Story Night" activity included a reader's theater, puppet shows and dramatizations put to music to demonstrate the variety of ways a person can read a book. Other activities tied to the "down-on-the-farm" theme of "Click, Clack Moo: Cows That Type."

Campbell County High School student organization members



Jennifer Whalen, left, and Whitley Smith, both seniors at Harrison County High School and members of the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), paint a display that will be used at Harrison County Middle School to promote the Unite to Read Certificate Program, which encourages middle and high school students to read.

also will participate in the Unite to Read Certificate Program. Until March 2006, students will select and read a wide variety of printed material that is relevant to their courses or career goals. They record each book they read and earn points toward recognition on the state and local levels.

Each student organization at the high school will sponsor a before- or after-school event like "Dinner and a Book," "Book Swap" or "Literacy Scavenger Hunt" to promote reading, said Connie Pohlgeers, curriculum

specialist for Campbell County Schools.

"We believe this program has definitely placed the spotlight on the importance of strong literacy skills at home, school and at work," Pohlgeers said. "Through awareness campaigns such as Unite to Read, students from seven to 17 can, for the first time, work together to foster a true love of reading."

In conjunction with Share a Story Night, Campbell County Schools and the Northern Kentucky Family Literacy Center of-

fer training sessions to help parents learn to use educational television programs as teaching tools with their children. "This investment of time and resources will have a huge impact on student success in the years to come," Pohlgeers added.

For more information about the Unite to Read project, contact Nancy Graham, program consultant with the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education, at (502) 564-3472, nancy.graham@education.ky.gov.



Portfolios — A Reality Check

By **Saundra Nathanson**
Rowan County Schools

As a veteran teacher of 22 years, my range of experience extends from teaching boisterous 3- and 4-year-olds all the way to middle school students. I taught the first middle-level class piano lab in Kentucky and middle school language arts. I currently teach eighth-grade American history.

One of my passions and crusades is helping other teachers understand the need for writing to be addressed at all grade levels and in all content areas — not just in accountability years or in language arts classes. That is not to say that teachers must work with students every year to publish a portfolio. I simply want to underscore that writing must be an ongoing process.

Assessment mandates three distinct types of writing be produced “across the content areas and (to) serve as an effective learning tool.” The following explains the three types of writing:

Writing to learn is often facilitated through the use of teacher-given prompts. The goal of this type of writing is to help students synthesize and apply new knowledge. Writing to learn can readily be applied across all content areas. Sample writings could include writer’s notebooks and journals.

Writing to demonstrate learning requires students to show more in-depth knowledge of subject matter in any content area. An obvious example is writing to answer open-response prompts.

Writing for real audiences and real purposes is authen-

by prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

In many schools, authentic writing is found largely in the assessment years. Teachers fail to continue to incorporate meaningful writing tasks into their curriculum during non-portfolio years. That was not the intention of the Kentucky Legislature.

‘Reality check’ time

Just as learning is a continuous process, writing is a process that students must use every year. Imagine a child who learns to walk at age one and then is required to crawl or ride in a stroller for two years. The child never would fully develop the necessary muscles or skills to walk. As a 4-year-old, the child may need to be taught again how to walk correctly.

This sounds silly, and yet it is exactly how writing is approached in many Kentucky school systems. Our fourth-, seventh- and twelfth-grade students must be re-taught the writing process because they have not properly flexed their writing muscles in previous grades.

For portfolios to produce successful writers, all teachers at all levels must be held accountable for teaching writing.

Writing at all grade levels

Imagine an attorney telling a judge she is not going to submit a written brief because “I am a student of history and the law. I do not use writing to show my knowledge. Let me tell you orally my arguments in this case.”

Or, what if a scientist discovered a new drug and refused to record his findings — or worse yet, couldn’t logically record what he learned!

Why then do some Kentucky educators say that history or science or mathematics teachers can’t teach the writing process? It will require effort from the entire community of Kentucky educators — from entering primary all the way to twelfth grade — for students to become proficient by 2014.

Positive teacher writers

Negativism is the infection within Kentucky’s writing program. It is perhaps the single, most difficult barrier for some teachers to cross on the way to producing healthy writers.

The National Writing Project (NWP) is making strides toward finding a cure for this dilemma through its summer professional development institutes. This federal grant program is designed to train teachers on “best practices” for teaching writing. Every year, the project places its graduates into leadership positions where they can

effect changes in how writing is perceived in the nation’s schools. (See story on this page about the Kentucky Writing Project.)

Getting real

Real-world issues need to be embedded within the writing curriculum in a way that is meaningful to students. For example, an eighth-grade economics class studying taxes, percentages, gross and net might be assigned to research occupations and their salaries.

Students could learn more about potential career interests and then create resumes and cover letters to prospective employers. The culmination of the activity might be mock interviews by peers, followed by letters written by the interview committee. Real writing creates real results and embeds a purpose for writing in the hearts of pupils.

I ended last school year by reading a book about the Holocaust to my history students. As I read, I saw one of my students carefully placing words on

paper. At the beginning of the year, he informed me that he hated writing.

Later that day, I found his paper secretly placed upon my podium. It contained a poem about the dangers of prejudice and its effect upon the Jews. I knew B.J. no longer hated to write!

If we can give one gift to students as teachers, I only hope that it is the gift of writing. It is a skill that will serve them the rest of their lives.

It is time for Kentucky teachers at all grade levels to become committed to the writing process. We need to provide writing opportunities each year for students that will then flood their working portfolios with real and useful writing.

(Saundra Nathanson is an American history teacher at Rowan County Middle School and a member of the Morehead Writing Project. Contact her at (606) 784-8911, snathans@rowan.k12.ky.us.)



Photo by Rick McComb

Saundra Nathanson conferences with Erin Ward about a writing project in her eighth-grade economics class at Rowan County Middle School.

Writing is required

Under Kentucky’s Learner Goal One, school systems in the commonwealth have been charged with the task of helping students learn to use their communication skills “for purposes and situations they will encounter in their lives.” That means students should experience writing for real purposes. This same expectation is supported in the Kentucky Revised Statutes, Kentucky’s Program of Studies, and the Core Content for Writing Assessment.

The Core Content for Writing

tic writing that asks students “to synthesize, analyze or evaluate what they have learned in order to communicate with a wider audience, usually outside of the classroom,” according to the “Kentucky Writing Development Teacher’s Handbook.” This third type of writing is typically thought of as portfolio-style publishing.

Writing for a real audience and purpose usually involves a strong commitment to the writing process. Students should follow a logical progression to develop and polish their writing

Kentucky Writing Project network

The National Writing Project network, mentioned in Saundra Nathanson’s article on this page, has been federally funded since 1991. The network helps support 167 sites across the country and abroad.

National Writing Project sites share these beliefs about writing and teaching:

- Writing is fundamental to learning in all subject areas and at all grade levels.
- Participants promote the best that is known about the teaching of writing from literature in the field, research, and the insights and experiences of successful teachers at all levels.
- Teachers are the best teachers of teachers.
- Teachers of writing must be writers themselves.
- Real change in classroom practice happens over time. Working as partners, universities and schools can articulate and promote effective school reform.
- Effective professional development programs are ongoing and systematic, bringing teachers together regularly throughout their careers to examine successful practices and new developments (NWP, 1998).

In Kentucky

All eight Kentucky Writing Projects are sites of the National Writing Project. The Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky universities sponsor the sites. Each site invites Kentucky teachers to participate in a four-week summer institute and year-round professional development opportunities. For more information, contact:

Bluegrass

Anne Robbins, director
annrbns@aol.com

Eastern Kentucky

Sally Martin, director
sally.martin@eku.edu

Purchase Area

Ted Brown and
Stephanie Kirk, co-directors
ted.brown@murraystate.edu

Louisville

Jean Hicks, director
jean.hicks@louisville.edu

Morehead

Nancy Peterson, director
n.peters@morehead-st.edu

Mountain

Lisa Maggard, director
Lisa.Maggard@kctcs.net

Northern Kentucky

Lynne Smith, director
smithly@nku.edu

Western Kentucky

John Hagaman, director
John.Hagaman@wku.edu

Student-designed memorial is a model project

By Cathy Lindsey

cathy.lindsey@education.ky.gov

What do you get when you cross classroom applications with a public need? In the case of Calloway County High School's technology education program, you get an award-winning engineering design that will have a lasting effect on the community.

Last January, when members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6291 approached the high school about designing a memorial park in Murray, teacher John Williams knew this would be an enriching project for his technology education students.

"It's a very real, tangible project that will have an impact on the community," Williams said. "That's the hook that promotes student commitment."

Williams also knew this project would provide a perfect example of how technology education is a practical application of what his students are learning in other academic disciplines.

"Tech ed illustrates and puts into prac-

tice the math and science concepts behind technology," he said.

This is, in fact, a desired goal of technology education programs in Kentucky: to be activity-based and truly interdisciplinary. In the shift from industrial arts to technology education, educators hope to create improved learning opportunities for students by allowing them to expand their range of experiences as critical thinkers and problem-solvers.

"Technology education is moving toward the STEM initiatives," said Henry Lacy, a Kentucky Department of Education consultant in the Division of Career and Technical Education. This means showing more relevance to science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills and concepts, he said.

The knowledge acquired through technology education is applied and integrated across the disciplines as students solve real-world problems and acquire a broad range of technical knowledge, rich experiences and useful techniques.

At Calloway County High, the challenge

was given to the students: Design a memorial honoring men and women from the community who serve in the armed forces. The design must be meaningful, functional, durable, cost-effective and integrated into the community.

The problem-solving process started immediately. The students studied the major design constraints and considerations including accessibility, area and space, cost, drainage, lighting, materials, significance, impact on the environment and impact on the community.

Jacob Roach, who was then a senior, took the lead on the project. At the time, he planned to join the Army National Guard after graduation. The idea of being a veteran himself someday made the project much more attractive to him.

Now a graduate with National Guard basic training under his belt, Roach credits his participation in the technology education program to teaching him important skills he will use in his future. "These hands-on technical skills we have learned will incorporate ideally into real-life opportunities," Roach said, "I wouldn't trade that for anything."

"We just wanted to create something that would show respect to the community," he added. "So we worked hard to incorporate as many aspects as we could, and we had to take into consideration the feasibility of each aspect."

For example, the students knew the memorial park should be accessible by wheelchair. So they calculated that each walkway should be at least eight feet wide to be accessible. They also wanted each of the six branches of the armed forces represented, so an early idea of using a five-point star was discarded.

The students considered whether to place live flower boxes in the park. Due to cost, changes of season and time management, they decided against flowers and chose to use benches instead.

With input from the local Parks and Recreation Department and the city engineer, the students worked on developing a memorial that would fit the community. They used aerial photography to survey the land and study drainage and watershed. While considering these points, as well as the land's orientation to the sun and reflected light, the students determined where trees should be planted, what materials should be used, where the six monuments should be placed and where flagpoles should be placed.

After mapping out the design on a computer, the students built a scale model. They also created a presentation board that displayed their problem-solving process.

The model of the project design took first place at the Kentucky Technology Student Association (TSA) engineering design competition at the state conference last

April. There, the students made a presentation explaining the thought processes that guided them to the end-design.

The TSA students then traveled to Chicago with their design and other projects to compete in the 2005 TSA National Conference against 4,500 other middle and high school students from across the nation. After competing in 12 high school events, the group completed the contest with four national finalist awards.

Sam Johnson and C.J. Holland won first place in the Technology Challenge. Austin Dodd won first place in the Promotional Graphics event. Nick D'Angelo was a fourth-place finalist in Cyberspace Pur-



Jacob Roach, left, who led the student design project and is now a Calloway County High School graduate, works with other members of the project team, C.J. Holland, Blake Lencki and Abby Kelly as they put the finishing touches on the model last spring in their career and technical design class.

suit, and the engineering design team led by Roach won fourth place for their model of Memorial Park.

"We are extremely proud of our students and their accomplishments," said TSA co-adviser Jeff Slaton. "Calloway County was the only high school from the Kentucky delegation to have four finalists and the only high school to have two first-place winners."

Upon their return from the national competition, students put finishing touches on the model and officially handed it over to the VFW to use. The model has been on display throughout the county to help with fundraising efforts.

The students have completed their portion of the project and are waiting to see how they can further assist the VFW in making the design a reality in their community.

Engineering design is just one facet of technology education. Technology education students also may study manufacturing, construction, electrical applications, communications, information technology, technical design and drawing, desktop publishing, computer-aided drafting and design, robotics, agricultural and biotechnology design, and medical technology.

For more information on Calloway County High School's program, contact John Williams at jwilliam@calloway.k12.ky.us or Jeff Slaton at jslaton@calloway.k12.ky.us, (270) 762-7374.

To learn more about technology education, go to www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?teched or contact Henry Lacy in the Division of Career and Technical Education at (502) 564-3775 or henry.lacy@education.ky.gov.



The model of Memorial Park has been on display throughout Calloway County to help raise funds for the VFW project.

Mentoring program helps students build relationships and reading skills

By Joy Barr

joy.barr@education.ky.gov

Listener — encourager — role model — friend. These words are how primary students in one Mercer County school describe their mentors from Tonya Barnard's family and consumer science class at Mercer County High School.

"I like it when they listen to me read and tell me how well I can read," said a primary student at Mercer County Elementary. Relationships between the older and younger students are blossoming in the third year of this literacy collaboration.

About 24 high school students participate in the program. Each is randomly paired with an elementary student. During the first two years, the student pairs worked together for nine weeks. The program's success has led to its expansion: students are meeting weekly for a full semester this year.

Mentoring is an opportunity for the younger children to see high school students excited and eager about reading.

Barnard obtained an Ezra Jack Keats grant to help with funding the project. Funding is used to purchase books and supplies.

Barnard simply wanted to "increase the love of reading" among all students. She thought that a mentoring program would be a win-win project for everyone. And the reading and writing skills of both sets of students have improved during this three-year project.

"I have been an avid reader all my life and want others to experience the joys that reading can bring. Reading helps a student be more successful in all areas of school and really improves skills such as writing, spelling and comprehension," said Barnard.

"Many students never read, and this project allows the students at both the primary and secondary level to see how fun and rewarding reading can truly be," she added.

Mentoring is an opportunity for the younger children to see high school students excited and eager about reading. The high school students often become positive role models and sources of inspiration for the younger students. Both sets of students celebrate their successes and encourage each other's strengths.

Terry Yates, principal at Mercer County High, says the mentoring program has provided an opportunity for the high school students to model best practices in reading and writing with the elementary students. "This program is making

a difference in both schools, and we want to continue with our partnership," said Yates.

The high school students involved range from ninth to 12th graders. They are learning how reading and writing can improve a student's educational skills, especially when learned at a young age, Barnard said. They also learn how to plan and prepare a lesson plan and to do follow-up reading evaluations. They form friendships with the younger students and develop a lasting bond.

Each high school student selects a book, reads it, completes a lesson plan, develops a reading and writing activity, works with a student, and then completes an evaluation. The high school students also evaluate how well prepared they were and what they could improve upon during a self-reflection activity.

"The mentoring program has been a great asset for my students," said Elizabeth Smith, a primary teacher at Mercer County Elementary. "The students have bonded through literature. They are able to have great conversations where they explore ideas, build background and make many connections. The mentors provide encouragement and nurture each student to feel a sense of being special. Our classroom overflows with pride when we celebrate their published work."

Each elementary student learns about the importance of reading and writing and is influenced by the older student. Each group of students looks forward to the weekly visits, and many have formed friendships, Smith said. Even more importantly, the older students often take time to listen to the younger students, and many of them become friends.

The elementary students create writing pieces — short stories, poems and dialogues — that become part of their writing portfolios. Sometimes the students draw illustrations to accompany their writing. At the end of the project all of the students' writing is placed in a showcase book and presented to Smith's class.

Barnard encourages reading in all of her high school classes, incorporating reading and writing activities through open-response questions, writing cookbooks, children's books, scripts and poetry. Any children's book created by a student is taken to the elementary school and read to selected classes.

Barnard is the adviser for the Family Career and Community Leaders of America club at Mercer County High. As one of the organization's projects, club members stay after school one day each week and tutor elementary students in reading.

"If I can encourage just one student to develop a love of reading (and writing) then I feel I have accomplished something meaningful," said Barnard.

Contact: Tonya Barnard, at Mercer County High School, (859) 734-4364, tbarnard@mercerc.k12.ky.us; www.ezra-jack-keats.org for information on Ezra Jack Keats Foundation grants



Mercer County High School senior Shay Driscoll helps third-year primary student Colton Hughey find the answer to a question on his worksheet. As his mentor, Shay encourages Colton to gain good reading and writing skills.

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BOARD from Page 1

board at its October meeting, supported the idea of holding local schools accountable. Fletcher also spoke in support of the department's efforts to improve public education through educator quality, enriched preschool, closing the achievement gap and refocusing secondary education.

"We will make strides in education if we continue to move forward," Fletcher said. "We must give every child the opportunity to be everything they can be."

Other Business

As a result of comments during a public hearing, the board adopted an amendment to its regulation regarding minimal nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs. The amendment would allow schools that do not have a school breakfast program to sell breakfast food and beverages in the mornings, with sales concluding at least three hours before the first lunch period.

This activity must involve students as a learning opportunity, like a student-run café. The food and beverages sold must meet the law's minimum nutritional standards.

Each year, the state board endorses proposals it deems appropriate for consideration by the Kentucky General Assembly. The board's 2006 legislative priorities are to:

- Clarify the language on principal selection to clearly indicate that the superintendent recommends candidates for the position and the council selects from among those recommended.
- Repeal of the sunset provision of KRS 157.621 to ensure any eligible district is



Kentucky Board of Education Chair Keith Travis, right, listens intently as Gov. Ernie Fletcher talks with board members about Kentucky's education goals.

able to levy the growth nickel if needed for facilities due to unusual growth in student population.

- Suspend the prevailing wage requirement for school construction for two to five years to study the impact.
- Require low-performing schools to review the readiness of all students entering the school in reading and mathematics, to conduct additional diagnostic assessments for students and to meet with parents to develop intervention plans addressing identified problems.

- Clarify that employment of teachers at the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf is comparable to local school districts' employment.

The board also approved the proposed biennial budget worksheet and strategic plan progress report for submission to the Governor's Office of Policy Management and the Legislative Research Commission. Those documents reflected the board's budget priorities.

The board is calling for additional funding for the Support Education Excellence

in Kentucky (SEEK) formula. This would cover cost-of-living increases for certified and classified staff, an increase in incentive compensation for certified staff and adding two days each year to the school calendar — one instructional day and one day for professional development. The proposed budget also requests full funding for preschool and school technology needs.

At a time when the Kentucky Department of Education and the state board are focused on restructuring secondary education, Kentucky's business leaders are calling for even more changes. Billy Harper, chairman of The Business Forum of Kentucky, presented the board with a report released by the forum that contains recommendations aimed at better preparing students for college and the work force.

The Forum's suggestions include fully funding preschool services and all-day kindergarten, creating incentives to attract the best teachers to low-performing schools, redesigning the professional development system and requiring more accountability at all levels. In addition, the report suggests expanding employer and community involvement in public schools.

The full report is available on the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's Web site at www.kychamber.com/kyccdocs/pdffiles/Business%20Forum%20Report.pdf.

The next meeting of the state board of education will be Dec. 7 and 8 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available online at www.education.ky.gov. Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click.

MIDPOINT from Page 1

tent areas from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2004-2005 school year. Although there are instructional challenges involved, the lack of progress can't be ignored," he said. "The Kentucky Board of Education has expressed frustration with the persistently low achievement of some of the state's public schools.

"In all parts of the state, there are pockets of excellence. But, the board is not satisfied. There's an obvious disparity, and the board has directed the Department of Education to step up its efforts to help schools raise achievement. It's critical that all parents and community members look beyond state results and trends to understand how well their own schools are performing," he added.

CTBS results

Results from the spring 2005 Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) show

that Kentucky students are making slow but steady progress in reading, language arts and mathematics.

End-of-primary students (third graders), sixth graders and ninth graders showed improvement in all three subject areas. Overall, the total battery scores at each grade level moved up from one to two points.

CTBS scores are the Norm Referenced Test (NRT) component of CATS, and those scores are included in accountability indices. The NRT component accounts for 5 percent of the total accountability index. The indices also include nonacademic indicators — dropout, attendance, retention and successful transition to adult life rates.

For more information about the 2005 CATS results for schools and districts, go to www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?05CATSresults.

Statewide Accountability Indices by Grade Level				
Index	Elementary	Middle	High	All Grade Levels
1999	66.5	64.0	63.4	64.6
2000	68.4	65.8	64.8	66.3
2001	70.9	67.8	66.9	68.5
2002	72.9	68.7	68.4	70.0
2003	76.1	71.5	70.1	72.6
2004	81.5	74.1	73.5	76.4
2005	81.5	75.8	74.9	77.4



Sharing learning with royalty

Primary student Ryan Noles completes a classroom project under the watchful eye of Miss Kentucky Kerri Mitchell during her visit to Wright Elementary in Shelby County. Mitchell is an education major at Eastern Kentucky University and has "Excellence through Education: The New Three R's of Education" as her yearlong platform. She is a fourth-generation teacher. Her mother, Doris Mitchell, is a former Highly Skilled Educator who currently serves as school improvement coordinator for Knox County Schools.

WRIGHT

from Page 1

About the winners

Wright has 15 years' teaching experience, with six in his present position as a high school science teacher. He is a National Board Certified Teacher and a National Board Certification mentor teacher.

He chairs the Physics Alliance and serves as a Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) resource teacher. He also is a member of the Male High school council.

Wright has received other state and national honors for teaching. Earlier this year, he was selected as one of three high school science teachers to receive the Disney Hand National Teacher Award.

Wright's professional affiliations include the National Science Teachers and National Education associations; Kentucky Association of Physics Teachers; Louisville Area Chemistry and Physics alliances; LATTICE Technology Alliance and the Louisville Area Amateur Astronomers.

Wright earned his bachelor's degree at Bellarmine University and a master's degree at the University of Louisville.

Stice has been teaching for eight years. She currently serves as McNeill Elementary's school technology integration specialist and has served on a variety of school-betterment committees.

She sponsors McNeill's Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) and is a member of the Kentucky and National

E d u c a t i o n associations. She holds National Board Certification as an early childhood generalist and is a member of the Kentucky Association of National Board Cer-

tified Teachers.

She was twice named W.R. McNeill Elementary Teacher of the Year and listed in "Who's Who Among America's Teachers." She is a three-time recipient of Bowling Green Independent Schools' "Beyond the Call Award" and earned honorable mention in the Classroom Connect Internet Educator of the Year Program.

Stice earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Kentucky University.



Jackson

Jackson is a 34-year veteran teacher and administrator. For the last five years, she has taught language arts to sixth-grade students. She has served as a trainer and presenter for

fellow teachers and as a resource teacher in the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP).

She wrote core content for the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) test and has served on the school-based decision making council. Her professional affiliations include the Franklin County, Kentucky and National Education associations, the National Council of Teachers of English and Kentucky Optimists International. As a principal, she was a member of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, the Association of School Curriculum Development and Phi Delta Kappa.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Spalding University and a master's degree at Butler University.

Ashland Inc. and the Kentucky Department of Education have sponsored the Kentucky Teacher Awards for five years. Ashland Inc. has recognized outstanding Kentucky teachers with its Teacher Achievement Awards since 1988, awarding nearly \$500,000 to approximately 300 P-12 teachers.



Stice



Photos by Rick McComb

Taking the controls

Amelia Riley, a junior at Lone Oak High School (McCracken County), prepares to take control of a piece of heavy equipment after receiving instructions from Fred Mitchell, a representative of Rudd Equipment. Riley and nearly 1,200 Kentucky students attended Kentucky Construction Career Days, a two-day event that introduced students to skills and equipment used in the construction industry.

Arts Education Showcase added to KTLC '06

Educators registered for the 2006 Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC '06) will have the opportunity to participate in the Louisville Arts Education Showcase on Friday, March 10. The showcase is one of several regional events sponsored by The Kentucky Center to help educators become more aware of artists and arts programs available to schools.

KTLC '06 is March 9-11, 2006, at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville. The three-day event features programs and classroom strategies in all content areas and technology.

The arts showcase will allow teachers and administrators to prescreen artists and arts organizations with education programs so they can choose the best arts education programs for their schools. Educators attending the showcase will receive a copy of the "Showcase Directory Book,"

which contains contact information, fees and program descriptions for all Showcase artists.

Artists will give mini-performances in the Cascade Ballroom from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. on March 10. Representatives for artists and arts organizations will have exhibits and be available to answer questions. Exhibits will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.

Admission to the Arts Education Showcase is included in the KTLC '06 conference registration fee. Educators who want to attend **only** the showcase must pay a separate fee and register by contacting Jeffrey Jamner at (502) 562-0703 or jjamner@kentuckycenter.org or by visiting <http://ww2.kentuckycenter.org/education/artseducation.asp>.

For information about KTLC '06, go to www.kentuckytlc.org.

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www.kentuckytlc.org

Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr
joy.barr@education.ky.gov

Kentucky schools win NCLB Blue Ribbon award

Four Kentucky public schools have been named 2005 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The four are: Brodhead Elementary in Rockcastle County, Lost River Elementary in Warren County, Salyersville Elementary in Magoffin County and Southern Elementary in Ohio County. Two Kentucky private schools also were named: Christ the King School in Fayette County and St. Agnes Parish School in Jefferson County. The NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools program honors public and private K-12 schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

The program requires schools to meet either of two assessment criteria. It recognizes schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds and have dramatically improved student performance in reading and mathematics over the last three years in accordance with state assessment systems.

It also rewards schools that score in the top 10 percent statewide in reading and mathematics on state assessments. Schools also must make Adequate Yearly Progress under the requirements of the federal NCLB Act.

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Brochure explains education funding

The cost of funding education in America's public elementary and secondary schools is the topic of a recently revised publication from the U.S. Department of Education. "10 Facts About K-12 Education Funding" provides an overview of K-12 funding in the United States. This full-color brochure includes an explanation of each fact along with illustrated graphs.

The brochure also specifies funding levels under the No Child Left Behind Act, which has increased every year since it was enacted in January 2002 — from \$22 billion to the \$25.3 billion proposed for fiscal year 2006. Federal dollars under NCLB are sent to states and school districts through a variety of programs, described briefly in the publication, including Title 1 (for high-poverty schools), Reading First, Improving Teacher Quality Grants and English Language Acquisitions.

For other facts about funding public education, download the brochure at www.ed.gov, or order toll-free at (877) 4ED-PUBS.

Parent involvement may boost high school grades

A recent research study in Kentucky concluded that the involvement of parents has a direct, positive impact on the academic achievement of high school students. Youth News Team, a group of Fayette County high school students, in collaboration with the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, surveyed nearly 4,000 students and 300 parents. The study emphasized the importance of parents and high school students working together to achieve academic success.

The study also found:

- 69 percent of students with a 3.5 or higher grade point average (GPA) reported having parents who regularly helped them with class selections each year.
- Students with GPAs of 3.5 or higher were nearly twice as likely to have parents who sometimes or frequently attended school events than students with GPAs below 2.0.
- 61 percent of the students with GPAs higher than 3.5 reported sitting down with their families three or more times per week for dinner.

Go to www.youthnewsteam.com to download the study.

Smaller learning communities training

The Kentucky Educational Development Corp. (KEDC) invites teams of administrators and teacher leaders from high schools interested in leading change to participate in a Dec. 13 workshop, "Reading and Shaping Culture," from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency in Lexington. Mike Rutherford, a nationally known education consultant, will provide information about implementing the smaller learning communities design. He also will help school leaders understand the nature and power of school culture by



Photo by Rick McComb

Identifying student needs

Wright Elementary Student Support Specialist Jill Tingle looks over the shoulder of fourth grader Nia Berry as they review Nia's answers to an online skills assessment. Shelby County students, third-year primary through tenth grade, are taking assessments in reading and mathematics this fall to provide teachers with information about individual student achievement and suggest strategies to improve skills in areas students have not yet mastered. Students will take a follow-up test later this school year.

identifying, describing and analyzing powerful nonschool organizational cultures.

KEDC also has other professional development programs planned for 2006 that support high schools interested in smaller learning communities.

Contact: Donetta Brown, SLC/PD programs coordinator, donetta.brown@kedc.org, toll free at (800) 737-0204; online registration at www.kedc.org, click on professional development

GEAR UP grants continue in Kentucky

The U.S. Department of Education has approved funding for state and partnership GEAR UP grants for Kentucky. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) provides services to high-poverty middle and high schools to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and complete postsecondary education degrees.

GEAR UP Kentucky incorporates a set of core standards to help guide school efforts in fostering an environment of success. These standards are based on five strategic priority areas — awareness, rigor, engagement, access and support — and are aligned with the Kentucky

Department of Education's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement.

Activities and services will be designed to ensure that disadvantaged and low-income students are intentionally nurtured to prevent failure and increase the number of students performing at the proficient and distinguished levels on assessments in mathematics, science and writing.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) administers the program. For more information about GEAR UP Kentucky, contact Sue Patrick with the CPE at (502) 573-1555, Sue.Patrick@ky.gov.

National Schools of Character sought

The National Schools of Character (NSOC) Awards program identifies exemplary schools and districts to serve as models for others and helps schools and districts improve their efforts in effective character education. A school of character receives up to \$2,000. To be eligible, a school must have been engaged in character education for a minimum of three full years, starting no later than December 2002 for the 2006 awards. The deadline for applying is Dec. 5.

www.character.org

Apollo heavy lifters find strength in school program

By Obbie Todd

Daviess County Schools

Nearly 20 years ago, a mother asked if her son could join my weight class at Apollo High School. As the father of two youngsters, I know why I said yes to the young man with a disability.

I saw in this mother a parent fighting to remove barriers for her child. What I took for granted as opportunities for all children, she had to fight to get the door opened for her son, David.

Right off the bat, I realized the task was larger than I expected. David couldn't lift the 45-pound bar. He didn't understand the concept of lifting weights and would unexpectedly quit, just let go of the bar.

Catching myself spending more time with David than the other 30 students, I asked the class, "Would anyone help teach David weightlifting?"

Bart, an upper classman who had taken the class before, volunteered. He didn't see the objective as building David's strength. He worked to make weightlifting fun for them both. I noticed high fives, grunts, yells and laughter more than I noticed hard lifting.

Bart was a motivator, and David soon grasped the concept of lifting. By the end of the semester, he had improved as much as the other students.

The next year, three new students with different disabilities enrolled in my class. Bart had graduated, but I found new trainers in my more experienced students. They were eager to become trainers, and they never took their responsibilities lightly.

Over the years, many student trainers have gone on to pursue degrees in special education. Others have continued helping with special education programs as volunteers in our community.

Nineteen years later, we've had well over 100 special education students participate in this inclusive weightlifting class. This semester, six trainers and 12 students with disabilities work together every day in the weight training class alongside regular education students.

Students receive an orientation to the program and safety training before learning the correct way to lift weights. Trainers work closely with their students to increase their strength and weightlifting abilities. And just like Bart and David, the trainers and students form a tight bond, often eating lunch together and enjoying activities outside school.

This class has been a launching pad for other community-related activities for young people with disabilities. Because of our first special education weightlifter's success in the class, David's par-



ents helped organize a weightlifting competition for the Daviess County Special Olympics.

The event has become a showcase for these extraordinary athletes long after they leave Apollo High School. David has won his weight division in Kentucky's Special Olympics for 18 straight years. He won three gold medals in the World Games of the Special Olympics and has placed first in competitions against young men without disabilities. David bench presses 240 pounds and can dead lift 400 pounds.

Heath, another former Apollo student, has set weightlifting records in three separate states. In 2004, he set an Indiana record in the wheel chair division, bench pressing 225 pounds.

Working with these special athletes is a school system and community project. The sports supervisor for the city of Owensboro was a student trainer at Apollo. His community programs offer competitions and activities for people with disabilities. The local YMCA and Atlantis Health Club also help Special Olympians train well into adulthood.

I've not found another project like this anywhere in the country. It is a truly remarkable program because our community cares about all of our children succeeding.

(Obbie Todd is a physical education teacher at Apollo High School in Daviess County. Contact him for more information about this program at (270) 852-7100, dtodd@daviess.k12.ky.us.)

Above, student trainer Michael Evans, a senior and football player at Apollo High School, spots Danny Flores while he completes six repetitions lifting 105 pounds as part of his daily routine in Obbie Todd's weight class. Below, members of the Apollo High School weight class get together for lunch. Trainers and students in the class form bonds of friendship that continue outside the weight room and beyond high school.



Photos by Rick McComb



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